Toronto General Hospital ?

June 1916

(18)

Addington Park War Hospital

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20th. June, 1916.

President R.A. Falconer,
University of Toronto,
C A N A D A.

Dear President Falconer,

As it now seems quite possible that Surgeon-General Carlton Jones will keep me at the work on which I have been engaged since the beginning of January, I feel I would like to acquaint you with the details to which I have been assigned since we arrived in England, a little over a year ago.

Up till December it had always been understood that I was to be sent to rejoin the University Hospital, as the work previous to this time was, so to speak, limited to some particular point of investigation.

After our arrival in England, I was detailed with Col. Roberts' assent and approval to the National Medical Research Committee for the purpose of working, firstly on an outbreak of typhus in Ireland, and secondly on certain problems in streptococcal septicaemia. At the time of starting the second piece of work, there was no immediate prospect of our hospital being sent to the Front, and such work seemed to offer a better use

of my time and experience than participation in the routine of the hospital at Shorncliffe, where the more or less temporary conditions under which we were working, gave rather limited possibilities. However, it so happened that when the hospital was ordered to the Front, I was rather deeply involved in this work at Cambridge. I was at once recalled to London and ordered to bring the experiments to a conclusion, which it appeared would not take more than 8 - 10 weeks. As a matter of fact, I was on the general medical staff of the hospital, and in no way in charge of any particular part of the work, so that my absence would not interfere with the work at No. 4.

The special problem I was working on at Cambridge was the production of a more satisfactory antiserum for streptococcal infections, along somewhat analagous lines to those which my departure from Toronto had interrupted. No doubt the slight hope that a successful result might be obtained, together with a consideration of the stage of the experiments and the expense already incurred by the Research Committee were the chief reasons why I was detained (Streptococcal infections are, of course, the cause of a great deal of the illness and death following gunshot wounds).

We had an unfortunate occurrence in the accidental death of one of the horses, from which it was hoped that we would obtain the best antiserum. And this in a way lengthened the time and, as well, prevented us from carrying out fully the research as originally planned. The antiserum which was eventually produced and tried out did not promise any very marked superiority over the products already available, so that I decided it would not, under the circumstances, be wise to attempt the logical completion of the work. Accordingly, I gathered the results together and reported to H.Q. early in December 1915.

After some delay in London, I was requested to get my notes in shape for medical publication, to proceed to Shorncliffe and there await notification of my transport to Salonica. All of which I did, and, as a matter of fact, was to sail in the course of a day or so when I was recalled to London by General Jones. I reported accordingly in London on January 2nd, and was informed that a Committee was under consideration for an investigation of the carrier problem in cerebrospinal fever, typhoid fever, etc., and that Sir Arthur May (Director General Naval Medical Corps) had written General

Jones asking if possible that I be detailed to this work with Dr. E.C. Hort. Apart from the honour of this request, I felt that if I were once more detailed away from No. 4, I would in all probability not again obtain a chance of rejoining.

It was rather a difficult decision for me to make, especially as I felt that University and Hospital trained men might possibly have given better value to the service as a whole had their Universities supplied Ottawa with a list of the available men and their various special or scientific training, rather than offered fully equipped units. Moreover, it seemed to me if I refused to join in this work (and General Jones was considerate in allowing me to choose) that such a decision would be based upon a sense of loyalty to the University Military Hospital, which possibly might not be to the best interests of the Service or the University.

Fortunately for me, Colonel Adami (McGill) is on the D.M.S. Staff, and was most kind in helping me to decide to take up this work and not to proceed to Salonica at this time. Previously I had written Col. Roberts regarding my move, but at this time I hesitated to tell either him or you, Sir, of the situation

until I could see a possible outcome in my new duties.

The work for the past four months was very heavy and particularly tiring, because to fulfil military regulations I was taking my share in the routine of the above hospital and, as well, returning to London to carry on the experimental side at the Lister Institute. As a matter of fact, the official appointment of a joint committee of the Navy and Army fell through although the material for investigation was obtained from both these Services and from the Canadians.

A short time ago we had made sufficient progress so that a presentation of our results to the various Services (Army and Navy) supplying the material was arranged. This was rather an interesting meeting for me, as there were present, besides Dr. Hort, Sir Alfred Keough (Director General R.A.M.C.), and Professor Farmer, Admiral Rolleston, Bassett-Smith and Whitehead of the Navy, Surgeon General Carleton Jones and Colonel Adami, C.A.M.C.

The outcome of the meeting has been a personal note of appreciation from Sir Alfred Keough and more practical arrangements for increased assistance and for carrying on the work, so that it will not be necessary to work at two places as formerly. In accordance with these arrangements I expect to move

to Croydon and General Jones has authorised the enlistment in Canada of my old laboratory servant, Greenwood, as a Staff Serjeant.

At this small discussion we only showed experimental evidence that in cerebrospinal fever there is a filter passing agent as well as the meningococcus usually regarded as the sole cause of the disease, and that the evidence that the disease has been produced experimentally in monkeys in view of our results must be reconsidered.

At the present time, I am given to understand that there are over 100,000 men who feel and look perfectly fit, but who are retained for varying periods as possible carriers of disease. Consequently, any means of detecting the dangerous amongst this great number might easily be a most valuable asset towards increasing the men-power of an army.

The work up till lately has been done by Dr. E.C. Hort and myself, and, as I should perhaps have said earlier, is a continuation of some of Dr. Hort's previous experiments.

In many ways I feel that my decision to comply with General Jones' request to take up this work instead of rejoining my Unit has not been altogether unhappy. I hope

Sir, it meets with your approval and that of Dean Clarke, because while I am not with No. 4 I still regard myself as connected with the University Hospital and in those papers have so published. I should state that I am writing Col. Roberts also, to acquaint him with the results of the work and my movements since January.

I am, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

CMG

20th: June, 1916.

Colonel J.A. Roberts,
No. 4 Canadian Gen. Hospital,
B.E.F.,
Salonica.

Dear Col. Roberts,

If I am not mistaken the last note I wrote you early in January stated that my transfer to No. 4 had been cancelled and I could not in consequence report to you as I had a week or so previously written. Instead I had accepted an appointment at Gen, Jones' request on a Committee whose duties were to be the investigation of certain sides of the " carrier " problem. The work, at first, was to have been a joint affair of the W.O. and the Navy, but that fell through, and I eventually appeared in orders as detailed to work at the Addington Park War Hospital, on the understanding that the experimental side should be carried out at The Lister Institute on material supplied by the Canadians and the Navy as well.

For some time the outcome of the experimental part of the work was in doubt qua any practical value so that I hesitated to write you again as I had had no answer from the one or two notes I had previously written. If the experimental side failed to give any indication of a practical bearing I did not

think it likely that I would be retained in the routine, as Gen. Jones was so kind as to allow me this amount of choice.

However, a short while ago a good deal of advance was made and in consequence of our tentative conclusions a demonstration of these was given to the following:

Surg. Gen. Sir Alfred Keough

Admirals Rolleston, Basset-Smith and Whitehead

Surg. Gen. Carlton Jones

Col J.E. Adami and Professor Farmer.

This was, so to speak, the preliminary part of an endeavour to obtain some method of distinguishing between the safe and dangerous carrier. Sir Alfred Keough was sufficiently pleased with the result that in consequence we have been given very much enlarged facilities and assistance. Gen. Jones has recruited my old lab servant whom I had in Toronto with adequate pay and rank.

I was awfully sorry to hear of the accidental death of Norman , and I am sure it must have been doubly tragic to you and the rest of the Hospital staff. I had had a note from him a short time before this, but to my great

regret had neglected answering, as so easily takes place with me.

I noticed that Don McGillivray was gazetted Lt. Colonel. Will you give him my best congratulations and tell him I saw Tommy Archibald on leave from France where he is with Dan Kappelle in a cav. field ambulance?

With best remembrances to yourself and the staff.

Yours sincerely,